



# Iceland Expedition

Land of Glaciers, Viking Sagas & the Midnight Sun

## 2013 Trip Dates

June 16 – 24  
July 14 – 22  
August 21 – 29



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Iceland is a land of striking landscapes and epic history, a uniquely beautiful world of waterfalls, volcanic peaks, ice-berg filled lagoons, and moss-covered lava fields. In this magical realm of fire and ice, we explore the most magnificent settings, including the heights of Skaftafell National Park, geologically spectacular Thingvellir National Park, where the continental plates are slowly pulling Iceland apart, and the high valleys and brooding heaths of ancient “saga” country where the rich history of Viking clan warfare played out in the Middle Ages. Our journey traces the southern and western coasts of Iceland, the most dramatic hiking territory on this extraordinary island. Along the way, we enjoy long hours of sunlight illuminating the northern sky and hear the colorful legends of a pantheon of Norse gods and kings.

# Detailed Itinerary

We recommend you arrive in Reykjavik a day early to enjoy this charming capital, with its beautiful harbor and fine restaurants. We are happy to book extra hotel nights for you.

**Weather Note:** The weather in Iceland is notoriously changeable and will dictate our exact hiking itinerary. We will remain flexible to accommodate weather conditions that may require changes, such as substituting different hiking routes or switching the days of certain hikes.

## **Day 1**                      **Reykjavik, Iceland / Hofn**

Early morning transfer to the domestic airport, just outside of town, for a short (50 minute) flight to the small coastal village of Hofn, the lobster capital of Iceland, set on the tip of a peninsula on Hornafjorder Fjord. The dramatic descending glaciers of the icecap of Vatnajokull, at 3,300 square miles Europe's largest glacier, provide a superb backdrop for this small southeastern coastal town. The Vatnajokull icecap looms on the horizon as a white line and descends in picturesque glacial tongues to the sea.

After check-in and a trip orientation meeting at breakfast, we set off on our first hike. From the abandoned farm houses of Horn, set beneath the impressive peaks of the Vestra-Horn headland, we hike across varied and spectacular terrain between mountain and shore.

Our hike traverses rock outcroppings, black sand shoreline, and the occasional steep and rocky scree slope, and at certain points on this part of the hike, we scramble and use our hands for balance as we ascend. The route eases as we approach the abandoned trading center of Papos ("Monk's River"), referring to Irish hermits who settled here prior to the coming of the Vikings in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Overnight at hotel in Hofn...**BLD**

*Approximate hiking distance: 5 miles, 300-foot ascent/descent*

**History:** While Irish monks used Iceland as a hermitage through the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the first permanent resident was a Norwegian who arrived in 874 AD and built a home in what is now Reykjavik. More Norse settlers followed during the Age of Settlement (870-930AD). They established a general assembly and convened in a building at Thingvellir known as the Althing. Among the achievements of this early parliament was an egalitarian nation of farmers with no hierarchical class structure. The republic was made up of 39 chieftains. In 1262, the land came under Norwegian rule, and in 1380, the Danish crown took over Iceland and ruled for 500 years. The recognition of Iceland as a sovereign state under the Danish crown came in 1918, and Iceland declared its independence as the Republic of Iceland in 1944.

## **Day 2**                      **Hofn / Ketillaugarfjall**

A trail with a moderate incline leads us out of the broad valley of Laxardalur as we hike a rarely traveled path alongside fascinating geologic formations and multicolored hills. Arriving at the base of the prominent peak of Ketillaugarfjall, we enjoy spectacular views of the massive Vatnajokull Glacier and the coast. After an optional hike to the summit for the energetic among us, we descend through rolling hills and then make a steep and rocky descent to the lush green lowlands of Nes. Overnight at hotel in Hofn...**BLD**

*Approximate Hiking Distance: 5-7 miles, 1,400 foot ascent/descent; with optional summit hike, 2,200 feet ascent/descent*

**Land of Fire and Ice:** The first humans who arrived in Iceland's unique landscape of sculpted lava flows, smoking volcanoes, and thundering waterfalls must have thought that they had arrived at a battlefield of the ancient gods. In fact, Iceland is very young in geological terms, formed only 20 million years ago as magma (liquid rock) poured from the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a fissure in the seabed between the North American and European continental plates. The country boasts more than 20 active volcanoes that



descend to Skogar, passing one gorgeous waterfall after another and on to our hotel set along the Ranga River. Overnight at hotel...**BLD**

*Approximate Hiking Distance: 7 miles, 2,200-foot ascent/descent*

**Icelandic Place Names:** Most Icelandic place names contain a reference to some natural feature of the landscape. *Oraefi* means upland; *vik* means small bay; *mork* means woods; *jokull* means glacier; *hofn* means harbor; *fell* or  *fjell* means mountain; *tindur* means summit; *dalur* means valley; *vellir* means plains. Words containing *hver*, *laug*, and *reyk* indicate the presence of hot springs.

### **Day 7                      Great Geysir / Hveragerdi**

We head out early in the morning to visit Gullfoss, a magnificent waterfall that disappears into a deep gorge. Next we explore the Great Geysir, the oldest and one of the world's most impressive examples of the phenomenon. Eruptions here, though rare and infrequent, can hurl boiling water up to 150 feet in the air. After a picnic lunch in a nearby woodland area, we drive to a trailhead close to the town of Hveragerdi, known for its geothermally heated greenhouses where vegetables and flowers are grown. Our hike brings us through the Reykjadalur Valley through green hills and valleys with warm streams and some natural Jacuzzis that are ideal for taking a dip. Our vehicle meets us at the end of our hike and transfers us to Hveragerdi. Surrounded by lava fields, craters, hot springs, and bubbling mud pools, the landscape around Hveragerdi is very dramatic. Overnight at hotel...**BLD**

*Approximate Hiking Distance: 7 miles, with a 1,000-foot elevation gain/loss*

**The Icelandic Sagas:** The heroes of the Viking Age are remembered in prose novels called sagas ("story" in Norse). The sagas describe historical events in Iceland, voyages of discovery across the North Atlantic, and family histories. They were written during the late 13th and 14th centuries on vellum using berry juice as ink. The best known are *Njal's Saga*, *Egil's Saga*, and *Laxela Saga*, which have been translated into numerous languages and are considered among the great heroic epics of the world, and they provided source material for Wagner's Ring cycle. For the ancients of Iceland, storytelling was a form of entertainment that passed the long winter nights or kept up spirits for traders a long way from home. The Viking kings often employed *skalds* (storytellers) to spread the word of their exploits. Although the stories were likely embellished by the skalds, they nonetheless preserve some truth of historic events that occurred across Scandinavia before and during Viking times.

### **Day 8                      Thingvellir National Park / Glymur / Reykjavik**

In the morning we drive to Thingvellir National Park, home of the world's oldest parliament, the Althing, first held in 930 AD. Until 1798, Thingvellir was the nation's meeting place for 868 uninterrupted years. We have a look at the remaining Althing buildings and tour the visitors' center, then head out to explore the fascinating features of Thingvellir National Park's landscape, a vivid reminder that Iceland is located on the Mid-Atlantic Range, the meeting point between the North American and European continental plates. The park is on a clearly visible part of the continental rift, where the end of the European plate is slowly drifting away from the North American continental plate, and the deep chasms visibly demonstrate how the land is slowly separating.

Our afternoon hike is a spectacular grand finale of sweeping coastal panoramas and the Glymur waterfall, plunging over 600 feet into a hidden chasm of moss-covered cliffs. We traverse a rocky and sometimes steep trail, skirting the waterfall's edge before crossing a refreshingly chilly stream, exploring the top of the falls again, then descending along a stony path with superb views of Whale Fjord. We return to Reykjavik and our hotel around 4 PM, gathering for our farewell dinner tonight...**BLD**

*Approximate Hiking Distance: 2-3 miles (morning hike); 7 miles, 1,800-foot ascent/descent (afternoon hike)*

## Day 9

## Blue Lagoon / Depart

After a leisurely breakfast buffet and morning in town, we head for a relaxing dip in the famous Blue Lagoon spa, with its vast outdoor pool of geothermally heated fresh seawater. The spa's state-of-the-art facilities include showers and a restaurant overlooking the lagoon as well as a geothermal beach. Later, we transfer to the airport for either homeward bound flights or flights to other parts of Europe. You can also combine this trip with our *Northern Iceland Expedition*—and receive a \$400 per person discount! Request or download separate itinerary from our website..B

# Trip Costs & Important Trip Details

<b>2013 LAND COST*:</b>	<b>\$4795</b> (12-15 members) <b>\$5295</b> (8-11 members)
<b>Single supplement:</b>	<b>\$790</b>
<b>Forced single supplement:</b>	<b>\$395</b>
<b>Internal airfare:</b>	<b>\$200</b> (subject to change) Reykjavik/Hofn

To offer the lowest possible cost, our trips are priced according to the number of participants on the trip. Costs are based on double occupancy. If you wish to have a single room, you must pay the single supplement fee. If you are willing to share accommodations, we will match you with a roommate if one is available. If we cannot match you with a roommate, the “forced single supplement” is listed above.

Because the prices published for our program are set so far in advance of the trip dates, we are occasionally faced with exceptional cost increases and/or currency fluctuations that affect the actual cost of running the trip. In most years, no price changes are necessary. However, we do reserve the right to raise or lower the trip price if there is a significant change in costs or exchange rates. If this is the case, your final invoice, sent out 75 days prior to departure, will reflect the difference in trip price. Please note that Wilderness Travel staff, or guests of Wilderness Travel such as travel writers, photographers, or leaders-in-training, are not included in the tier pricing count.

### \*CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATES

Due to the volatility of currency markets, we can only offer the most competitive pricing on our trips in Iceland by partially tying the trip cost directly to the value of the Kroner. In the late spring of 2012, when we set the rates for our 2013 program, the US Dollar equaled 130 Kroners. While in most years, no price changes are ever necessary, if there were to be a significant change in exchange rates, we may be forced to raise or able to lower our trip price; if so, your final invoice, sent two weeks before your final payment is due, will reflect the difference. Please note that the calculation will not be a straight proration. While most of the trip cost is paid in Kroner, the remainder of our expenses are paid in dollars. The overall effect is to moderate any change; thus, if the Kroner were to rise in value, the land price would rise less than might be expected, and if the Kroner were to fall, the drop in land price would also be less than might be expected.

### LAND COST INCLUDES:

- expert leadership of a Wilderness Travel Trip Leader and local guides
- accommodations
- all meals included (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- land transportation, airport transfers, and sightseeing as noted

**LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:** international airfare, transfers for independent arrival or departure, any meals not specified after each itinerary day, airport departure taxes, optional tipping or gratuities to leaders or staff, additional hotel nights that may be necessitated by airline schedule changes or other factors,

expenses such as medical immunizations (if any), travel insurance, or passports and visas, and other expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, laundry, and so on).

#### **TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

At time of reservation	\$500
120 days prior to departure	20% of land cost
60 days prior to departure	Balance

#### **CANCELLATION & TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE**

Minimum fee	None
46-90 days prior to departure	25% of land cost
45 days or less	100% of land cost

#### **TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE**

We highly recommend that trip members purchase trip cancellation insurance. A travel insurance application will be provided in your confirmation packet. The insurance premium must be paid at the time of final payment or earlier.

#### **ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE**

The meeting point for the journey is Reykjavik, Iceland. At the end of the trip you will be transferred to the airport in Reykjavik. Our *Arrival & Departure Logistics* memo, included in your confirmation packet, has further information.

Trip members make their own arrangements for air transportation. Suggested flight routings and airlines are included in our *Arrival & Departure Logistics* memo, sent with your confirmation packet. *Please review your proposed air schedule with us before purchasing your tickets.* Once flights have been booked, please fax (1-510-558-2489) or email (info@wildernesstravel.com) us a copy so that we can inform the Trip Leader of your flight times. Please include your Trip Name and Trip Dates with your flight information. Due to airline schedules, an extra overnight may be necessary at either the start or end of your trip. This is an “on your own” expense. We are happy to book extra hotel nights for you.

Note: The first and last name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport *exactly*, otherwise you may be denied boarding. Please remember this when reserving your flights. In addition, your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US (in most cases).

## Leadership

Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders have a passion and a joy for creating an unforgettable journey. We are extremely proud of them and the incredible travel experiences they make possible. One of the following people will lead the trip. *For photos and bios of our Trip Leaders, visit [www.wildernesstravel.com/leaders](http://www.wildernesstravel.com/leaders).*

**Gunnar Bjorgvinsson**, a graduate of the University of Iceland, spends his summers guiding sea kayaking trips and hiking trips in his native Iceland and in the winter teaches classes in wilderness skills. He has a vast knowledge of Icelandic culture and history, from its famous mountain trolls to the stories of its Viking seafarers.

**Oskar Gudjonsson** was born and raised in Reykjavik and at age 12 moved with his family to a small fishing village in the Icelandic countryside. His love of outdoor adventure led him to pursue a degree in Outdoor Education at Australia's La Trobe University. He is on the board of a volunteer rescue organization in Reykjavik, teaches and guides groups in sea kayaking, trekking, and skiing, and also enjoys sailing.

# Additional Information

## WHAT THE TRIP IS LIKE

This trip is Level 3+, Moderate to Strenuous. It features daily mountain hikes and hotel accommodations throughout. The hikes can be considered strenuous because they are on undefined, steep trails or through some rugged terrain. The terrain can be very wet. There are many short but steep parts on our hikes, and much up and down. Sturdy, **well-broken-in** hiking boots are essential. Gaiters are not required but will protect your pant legs from getting wet when we hike through boggy areas. Hiking poles are highly recommended.

Temperatures should be in the mid 50s, perfect for hiking. The weather can provide spectacular clear days but can also be very wet and changeable, and we want you to be well prepared for all that you may encounter. Icelandic weather is always unpredictable, so you must come prepared for at least some rain and bring appropriate rain gear. It is unlikely that it will be hot. Please note that in Europe, the dinner hour is considerably later than what it is in the U.S. We do our best to secure early reservations for our groups, but most often the evening meal will be at 7:30 PM.

Iceland's weather will dictate our exact hiking itinerary. Trip members need to remain flexible in consideration of inclement weather that may require changes, such as substituting different hiking routes, canceling hikes, or switching the days of certain hikes. For your own enjoyment, we recommend that you make a special effort to be in good physical condition. Daily brisk walking and/or regular hiking (or using a stair-climbing machine at your gym) are excellent preparatory exercises.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 and ask for our Europe Manager, or email [europe@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:europe@wildernesstravel.com).

## REFERENCES

We are proud to have an exceptionally high rate of repeat travelers. We are happy to put you in touch with a past client who has been on this trip.

## VISIT US ONLINE

At [www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com), you can find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and special WT Expeditions that aren't listed in our catalog. You can also access a complete library of our detailed itineraries and browse through the customized reading lists for each of our adventures.

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #1007696-40

While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in **General Information** section of the **Wilderness Travel Catalog**.

*Revised January 11, 2013*